

# AP Music Theory Syllabus

## Course Overview:

### Introduction:

*"The ultimate goal of an AP Music Theory course is to develop a student's ability to recognize, understand, and describe the basic materials and processes of music that are heard or presented in a score. The achievement of these goals may best be approached by initially addressing fundamental aural, analytical, and compositional skills using both listening and written exercises. Building on this foundation, the course should progress to include more creative tasks, such as the harmonization of a melody by selecting appropriate chords, composing a musical bass line to provide two-voice counterpoint, or the realization of figured-bass notation."*

(Quote from Music Theory AP website:  
[http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub\\_music.html?musictheory](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub_music.html?musictheory))

This class covers the "basic material" as we charge forward to the "more creative tasks." We learn to compose, write out music commonly heard on the radio, and analyze the hitherto mysterious relationships between notes. There will be a computer component in this class available to the students for doing exercises and notating compositions.

### Prerequisites:

Who should take this class? Anyone who seeks a thorough understanding of how music is assembled. Students with experience playing an instrument are at a huge advantage in this class. Students should be able to play scales in all keys and arpeggiate major and minor triads above any given starting note. Students without these skills are encouraged to develop them over the summer. Once you enroll for this class, you should consult the instructor for a supplemental summer plan tailored for your needs.

Summer Work: Play all scales. Arpeggiate 1, 3, 5 with each scale. Sing solfege or scale degree numbers for melodies in your repertory, songs that you know, or just random lists of numbers. (see instructor for more information on these exercises.)

### Expectations:

This class, like the AP test itself, is aurally based. Knowing the theory with pencil and paper is just part of the story- well trained musicians also know it with their ears. To that end, students will be singing and working aural exercises throughout this course, hopefully beginning with your summer preparation outlined above. The development of aural skills takes long and steady training- so stick with it! You can expect an average of

a third of class time devoted to ear training. This includes short dictations, sight singing, drills, exercises, as well as several large dictation projects. You will be given material to practice on your own, and additional resources are available for check-out. These include books of sight singing examples, software for dictations, and dictation packets with CDs made by the instructor.

AP Music Theory includes the study of a wide variety of vocal and instrumental music in the canonical tonal repertoire. In addition to the many examples offered in the text, the dictation and analysis packets contain specific pieces that are explored in great detail. The dictation packet contains excerpts from a Handel Trio Sonata, solo concertos by Haydn and Vivaldi, Symphonies by Haydn and Mozart, a Schubert Mass, a Schubert Art Song, and a popular song from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, the analysis packet contains excerpts from several Bach chorales; a Bach Cantata; piano works from Beethoven, Mozart, Dussek, Handel, and Schubert; Romantic period Art Songs; and a Haydn quartet.

Homework loads will vary from student to student at different times in the year. Students with little background on instruments should expect to spend many hours each week on the homework during the first unit in order to catch up with those more experienced. Students who finish work quickly are expected to achieve a higher level of sophistication in the composition and dictation projects assigned periodically during the year.

Each student is issued a textbook for use during the year. Each student also receives a packet, compiled by the instructor, of music to analyze and dictation forms to be completed through the year. Sound files for the dictations are available on CD from the instructor, or on-line at [www.removed for anonymity](http://www.removed-for-anonymity) under the music theory tab. Each chapter will have homework problems in the book and additional worksheets provided by the instructor. These are stapled together and turned in at the end of the chapter. Quizzes are given often, and a test follows each unit.

The music program has purchased additional resources to assist students with their studies. Please use these resources; sign each item out when you take it and then sign back in when you return it - see the instructor for details.

### Ear Training- a pedagogical overview

In AP Music Theory, students develop the framework for both pitch and rhythm. The framework for pitch is the scale. Students practice to recognize and reproduce scale degrees by employing solfege. Students apply their skills in sight reading and melodic dictations on average 30 minutes a week. The framework for rhythm is meter, beats, and beat divisions. Students learn to identify rhythms according to their metric placement, rather than the duration of each pitch. Short drills of rhythms are done each week, and rhythmic dictations are on weekly ear training quizzes.

The study of intervals and duration comes after students have a firm grasp of scale degrees and metric placement. Students begin by drilling small cells of three pitches contained within a third. The course also progresses by adding chromatic pitches in the scale

framework (borrowed leading tones and chromatically altered upper neighbors), as well as drilling a purely chromatic framework contained within a perfect fourth. Work on rhythm outside of a metric framework and in complex metric frameworks are also approached later in the semester.

Chords are taught aurally in two ways. First, students develop the ability to hear upper chord members against the bass note, beginning with root position chords with the bass separate from the upper voices. In other settings, student should be able to hear chord tones as a set of pitches, and identify the intervallic structure of those notes. Chord recognition begins with major and minor triads and proceed to 7<sup>th</sup> chords in various inversions.

### **Required Text:**

Benward, Bruce. *Music in Theory and Practice*, 7th Edition. McGraw-Hill, 2003.

### **Required Ear Training and Fundamentals Software Registration and Use:**

[www.MyMusicianship.com](http://www.MyMusicianship.com) and [www.SonicFit.com](http://www.SonicFit.com)

### **Other Available Text** for check out with instructor:

Benjamin, Thomas, Michael Horvit, Robert Nelson. *Music for Analysis: Examples from the Common Practice Period and the Twentieth Century*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Berkowitz, Sol, Gabriel Fontrier, Leo Kraft. *A New Approach to Sight Singing*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Norton & Company, 1986. (3 copies)

Kostka, Stefan, and Dorothy Payne. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Turek, Ralph. *Analytical Anthology of Music*. Alfred A Knopf, inc. 1984.

Turek, Ralph. *The Elements of Music: Concepts and Applications, Vol. I*, 2nd edition. McGraw-Hill. 1996.

## Outline:

### First Semester

#### UNIT 1 : Music Fundamentals

(notation, scales, intervals, chords, inversions, key signatures, meters, and rhythm)

Students develop a working knowledge of how music is notated; how pitch is organized into and identified by scales, intervals, chords, and keys; and how sounds in time are organized and identified in rhythms and meters. For most students, this unit provides a deeper understanding of material that they already apply when they play their instrument. Unit 1 challenges all students to become conversant in musical vocabulary and facile with skills fundamental to music literacy.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
1	1	rudimentary terminology such as staff, clef, octave identification, accidentals, intervals, duration, meter, metric classification, time signature, beat divisions, beaming, tie, dot, dynamic markings, notational conventions	2 quizzes on material
2	2	pitch class, scales (major, melodic minor, harmonic minor, natural minor, 20 <sup>th</sup> century synthetic scales, modes), relative and parallel relationship of scales, scale degrees and function, circle of 5 <sup>th</sup> s, key signatures	first ear training quiz: scale degree recognition and dictation of melodic fragments
3	3	intervals, quality and quantity classification, enharmonic intervals, compound intervals, complementary (inverted) interval relationships, transposition- tonal and real; introductory exploration of imitative counterpoint and fugal form	composition assignment- imitative counterpoint at the dominant  quiz on transposition  ET quiz – incorporates melodic dictation
5	4	chords, harmony, triads (major, minor, augmented, diminished), inversions (root, first, second), scale degree classification, roman numeral chord analysis, pitch inventory, figured bass	analysis project #1 – roman numeral analysis of a full chorale  quiz – realization of figured bass
6	-	unit review, practice test	unit test

## UNIT 2 : harmony- beginning four part writing

(cadences, spacing, voice leading, roman numeral analysis, figured bass lines, circle of fifths, chord progression, chord function, non chord tones)

This unit focus on the skills of four part writing. Students analyze chorales for chord structure and learn how to provide a roman numeral analysis of a chorale. They learn the rules of proper voice leading and apply these rules to compose chorales from figured bass or roman numeral progressions. Students go on to learn the tonal relationships of chord successions. Why does it sound good to end a phrase with ii V I, while ending with ii I iii sound like you're lost. Students apply their understanding of chord relationships in harmonizing melodies and writing compositions from scratch.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
7	5	cadences (perfect and imperfect authentic, half, plagal, deceptive), nonharmonic tones (passing tones, neighbor tones, escape tones, anticipations, suspensions, retardations, appoggiaturas, pedal tones), accented and unaccented nonharmonic tones	quiz on cadences  quiz on nonharmonic tones
8-9	8-9	voice leading principles, types of motion (parallel, contrary, oblique, similar) introductory species counterpoint, four-voice texture, open and close spacing of chords, realization of figured bass, rules for 4 part writing, doubling principles, treatment of chords in inversions, identification of 2 <sup>nd</sup> inversion chord types.	quiz – error detection of chorale  quiz – second inversion chord type identification  quiz – realize a roman numeral progression  ET quizzes incorporates 4 part harmonic dictations
10-11	10	harmonic rhythm, root relationships, types of harmonic motion (progression, retrogression, stagnation), circle progressions, root movement up a fourth/down a fifth, strong and weak root movement, other root movements (up 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ), tonal relationships (chordal hierarchy, planetary depiction of chords, chord substitutes, tonic, dominant and predominant functions) harmonizing melodies	quiz – root movement identification  analysis project #2 – harmonic analysis of a minuet for piano  quiz- compose bass line and chords for a melody  <u>Dictation Project #1:</u> pop-song melody, bass-line, and roman numeral analysis
12	-	unit review, practice test	unit test

### UNIT 3 : melody and accompaniment

(melodic structure, phrase structure, texture, harmonic reduction)

Students study how melodies are constructed, covering topics such as motives, segments, phrase members, sequences, extensions climax, and phrase shape. Students study how phrases are assembled into larger units, such as periods, and how phrases relate to each other. The unit ends with a study of accompaniment of melody. Students learn about texture and accompaniment patterns. At the end of this unit, students analyze both written and aural music, and then compose phrases and short pieces to share with the class.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
13-14	6	melody, melodic construction, motive, segment, phrase member, phrase, sequence (tonal, real, modified, false), phrase structure (parallel and contrasting, phrases, antecedent/consequent phrase relationship) periods and double periods, phrase extensions and modifications, phrase analysis (shape, climax), melodic reduction	quiz – phrase structure – sequences  ET quizzes, focus on melodic dictations and singing on solfege  analysis project #3 – roman numeral and phrase structure analysis of a Schubert Impromptu  16) <u>Dictation Project #2</u> : Gavotte melodic dictation and analysis.  composition – guided writing of 10 melodies
15-16	7	texture types (monophonic, homophonic, polyphonic) sub-categories of homophonic textures (melody and accompaniment, homorhythmic), categories of textural levels (primary melody, secondary melody, parallel supporting melody), textural reductions (harmonic reduction), textural embellishment (arpeggiated chords, Alberti bass, boom chuk chuck)	quiz – texture identification  quiz – textural level identification and harmonic reduction  analysis project #4 – harmonic reduction, roman numeral analysis, and phrase structure analysis
17-18	-	catch-up, unit review, practice test	unit test
17-18	-	composition project – melody with piano accompaniment, must be at least a double period. Submit drafts of 3 different compositions, instructor will select one for you to polish in a final draft.	

## Second Semester

### UNIT 4 : harmony- seventh chords

In this unit, students study the voice leading principles and functional use of seventh chords, beginning with V7 and proceeding to viio7, viiø7, ii7, iiø7, and then considering all others. Students apply their knowledge in the analysis and composition of four part writing, as well as other harmonic settings.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
1	13	overview of all 7 <sup>th</sup> chords, inversions for 7 <sup>th</sup> chords, voice leading principles for 7 <sup>th</sup> factor (in any chord), chain of 7 <sup>th</sup> chords in circle of fifths	quiz – 7 <sup>th</sup> chord quality, roman numeral, inversion, and figure identification  ET incorporates drills for 7 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> chords in root position
2	11	V7 – I : tendency tone resolutions (fa-mi, ti do)  review of 4 part choral writing, applying 7 <sup>th</sup> chords in this setting	quiz – V7-I tendency tone resolutions  quiz – realize a roman numeral progression and a figured bass that include 7 <sup>th</sup> chords.
3	12	vii7-I : tendency tone resolutions (fa-mi, ti do), half diminished and fully diminished qualities, viio7- i : (si-la, re-do, fa-mi), review and more applied 4 part writing	
4	13	part writing of non-dominant function 7 <sup>th</sup> chords	
5	-	unit review, practice test	unit test

## UNIT 5 : modulation, tonicization, and secondary function

(modulation types, pivot chords (common chords), secondary dominants, modal borrowing)

Students examine music that changes keys, and learn how to identify the point of modulation and the technique used for modulating. (This unit only considers modulations to closely related keys). Students then study tonicization and secondary function- moments in which a different key is referenced briefly. Work in this unit includes many exercises, as well as brief analyses and compositions of chorales, monophonic lines, and melodies with accompaniment.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
6-7	14	modulation to closely related keys, modulation types (phrase, direct, common chord/pivot chord, chromatic), analysis procedure	quiz – identifying closely related keys and a roman numeral analysis of modulating chorale  quiz – realizing and analyzing a modulating figured bass  ET incorporates chromatic solfege and their tendencies (fi-sol, te-la, etc) Dictations of modulating melodies  <u>Dictation Project #3</u> – Flute Concerto- dictation and analysis involving modulation
8-9	15	tonicization, secondary dominants, secondary leading tones, treatment of secondary function chords in 4 part writing	quiz – secondary chord identifications  <u>Dictation Project #4</u> – dictation and analysis involving secondary dominants; phrase analysis for review.  <u>Analysis project #5</u> – roman numeral and phrase structure analysis of full chorale including secondary dominants
10	-	unit review, practice test	unit test



## UNIT 6 : form

(binary, rounded binary, ternary, closed and open form, sonata form )

This unit covers the principles of simple musical forms and the vocabulary used by musicians to discuss those principles. At the end of the unit, students will write a major composition project that incorporates all that they have learned in the six units. The project will be performed in class.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
11	16, 17	form, formal divisions (closed, open), simple binary, rounded binary, ternary, compound forms, strophic, through composed	analysis projects #5,6,&7 – analysis of form
12	-	Sonata and Rondo forms (exposition, development, recapitulation, ritornello)	analysis project #5 – sonatina analysis  11) Finish <u>Dictation Project #3</u> – Flute Concerto- questions on form  12) <u>Dictation Project #5</u> – dictation and analysis of sonata form in a Mozart String Quartet using digital time display
13	-	composition project – write a piece in binary, ternary, sonata, or rondo form. Your piece must be performed in class, so select the instrumentation for the piece based on knowing performers who are available to play for the class.	
13	-	Concert of student compositions	

## REVIEW FOR AP EXAM

After unit 6, several class sessions will be used to prepare for the AP exam.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
14-15	-	review	
15	-	mock AP Music Theory test	counts as unit test

UNIT 7 : introduction to 20<sup>th</sup> century compositional procedures  
(impressionism, extended tonality, atonality, minimalism, indeterminacy)

After the AP exam, the instructor will present a cursory overview of several 20<sup>th</sup> century compositional traditions. Many musical examples will be played in class in order to expose students to these musical traditions. Students will then select a topic to explore further and produce a final project. Projects may include a presentation, an analysis, or a composition.

Week	Cpt	Content	sample assignments (beyond the HW packet)
16-17	-	Impressionism (extended tertian sonorities, quartal harmonies, chord planing, modal cadences, and review of modes and synthetic scales), tonal extensions (bimodality, polytonality, pandiatonicism, centrism, polyrhythm, polymeter, asymmetric meters), texture based compositions (clusters), atonality (serial composition, cell unification, set theory), minimalism, indeterminacy	in class compositional and analysis exercises  music listening in class  final project
18	-	work on final project	final project presentation

**Grade:**

Your theory grade will be calculated using a total point system. The mid-term and final exams are worth 200 points, tests are worth 50-100 points, most quizzes are between 5 and 15 points. Daily homework assignments are usually 10 points, and special take home composition and analysis projects can be as many as 50 points.

Your final percentage is your total points divided by the total possible points. Grades are then rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Grading Scale:**

A 93-100	A- 90-92	
B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62